

MARITAL CONFLICT AND STABILITY AMONG
KOREAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES

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Abstract

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As reported in Korean Times (14 Mar. 1986), Korean-Americans in the U.S. numbered 542,400 while an unofficial estimate places that number somewhere between 700,000 and 1,000,000. They are experiencing severe conflicts in their marriages and social lives. According to that study, the divorce rate among Korean-Americans is six times as high as that among Koreans in Korea.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the sociological and psychological background of the marital conflicts which Korean-Americans experience, and propose avenues of care for these troubled persons. From an equal marriage point of view, the writer has studied the Biblical marriage, recent marriage theories regarding conflict and power struggle, and pastoral counseling theories. Then, an attempt is made to apply those theoretical outcomes to the marriage of Korean-American.

The God who intervenes with human history enables people to become fully human beings through the process of historical and cultural development. A new cultural

environment can be both a good and a bad opportunity for people. In other words, immigration offers not only conflicts, but also a growing opportunity for Korean-Americans, if coped with successfully.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. Introduction	1
Thesis	3
Methodology	4
2. A View of Marriage	6
Historical Background of the Biblical Marriage	6
Biblical Meaning of Marriage	9
Creation Story	9
Jesus' View of Marriage	12
Paul's View of Marriage	15
Korean View of Marriage	18
3. Marital Conflicts	23
Money and Work	23
Power Struggle	27
Conflicts	32
Personal Conflict	34
Structural Conflict	35
Quality and Stability of Marriage . . .	37
Quality	37
Stability	41

4.	Analysis of Marital Conflicts Among Korean Immigrants in the United States	44
	History of Korean Immigrants	44
	Adaptation Process	46
	Marital Conflict of Korean Immigrants .	49
	Money and Work and Their Implications for Korean Immigrants	50
	Power Struggle and Its Implications for Korean Immigrants	51
	Conflict and Its Implications for Korean Immigrants	53
	Marital Quality and Stability and Those Implications for Korean Immigrants	55
5.	Pastoral Counseling for the Conflict of Korean Immigrants	57
	Goal of Conflict Counseling	57
	Method of Conflict Counseling	59
	Counselor and Counselee	62
	Variables	65
	Church as a Counseling Institution .	67
	Strengths of Pastoral Crisis Counseling	70
	Practical Applications	72
6.	Conclusion	78
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	83

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Korean immigrant group is one of the fastest growing ethnic minorities in the United States.¹ "Fast growing" has both a positive and a negative meaning. The positive aspects of the growing Korean-American community are two-fold: (1) the Korean-American community is now able to handle its own problems to some extent, and (2) the Korean-American community is raising the level of awareness of the Korean identity in American society. The negative aspects are that such a rapidly growing community is constantly producing complex problems and is slow to make social changes. In other words, quantitative growth generally contains success as well as instability.

Another serious current issue that the Korean-American community is facing is that of marriage for second generation Korean-Americans. Although the community is quite large in numbers, it does not have enough channels for second generation Korean-Americans to know each other and thus they are having a hard time finding appropriate mates

¹ "Korean-American Families in the U.S." [translated title], Korean Times [Chicago], 14 Aug. 1986:1.

within the community.² Many second generation Korean-Americans tend to favor interracial marriage; whereas, first generation Korean-Americans strongly oppose this trend.³ First generation Korean-Americans attempt to match native Koreans to their children as mates; but such arranged marriages are totally different from those practiced in Korea and even dangerous because the second generation Korean-American and the native Korean have grown up with completely different values and cultures. Recent data show that such marriages are very unstable.⁴

Korean ethnic churches are partly responsible for dating, meeting, and matching of Korean-Americans. They also serve as a good place for first generation Korean-Americans, regardless of their social status or years of living in the United States, to share their common concerns (e.g., devotional matters, social concerns, fellowship, etc.).

On the other hand, Korean ethnic churches sometimes seem to prevent Korean-Americans from participating in the American society because they tend to preserve Korean culture and values without opening up to American culture. To deal with conflicts that Korean immigrants bring to

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

America, Korean-American ethnic churches must open their doors to American society.

Within the immigration process, first generation Korean-Americans are still accustomed to the Korean way of marital relationships. Some of them will insist on the traditional model of marital relationships, others will adopt the new sex roles, and some will try to harmonize both concepts and blend them into their new situation.

In addition, socioeconomic factors will greatly influence the building up of their new marital relationships. The salient phenomena of dual careers among Korean immigrants produce considerable conflicts within their marriages. Judging from that, such marital conflicts and problems must be deeply interrelated with cultural changes and influenced by a new socioeconomic situation.

Thesis

My discourse is based on several bedrock suppositions. First, most Korean-Americans, as first generation immigrants, are experiencing some degree of extra-normal conflict as a result of their cross-cultural environment and adjustment thereto.

Second, such conflicts can be a good growth opportunity if they are coped with successfully. Growth depends on how the conflicts are managed. Crises among Korean immigrants are most often a result of inadequate or improper response

to conflict situations.

Third, the conflicts of Korean-Americans are derived not only from personal causes but also from cross-cultural causes. Thus, a new counseling perspective--structural conflict counseling--is required to deal with such conflicts.

Fourth, the growing Korean-American community and church have an urgent need to establish and develop an immigration theology to deal with the above-mentioned issues and ultimately lead the Korean community to a new immigrant society.

Fifth, God gave the institution of marriage to human beings as a gift and wants us to enjoy abundant lives through marriage. The cross-cultural situation is not the end of the traditional marriage but provides an opportunity to make a creative marriage.

Methodology

This study has made use of a combination of academic and empirical resources. Theological, sociological, psychological, and personal experience have all been employed in the definition and theoretical resolution of the stated problem. To limit this study, I have chosen to restrict consideration in this treatment to the pastoral care of abnormally conflicted first generation Korean immigrants in the United States, to those not newly settled

but those who have moved into later stages of the process of adjusting to their new environment.

CHAPTER 2

A View of Marriage

Historical Background of the Biblical Marriage

The institution of marriage in the Bible reflects a long history of sociological and cultural development, as to some stages of which there can be no absolute certainty. Polygamy was widespread in ancient Israel; social position and economic status usually determined the possession of more than two wives. Yet in certain ways the Old Testament stresses monogamy, e.g., in Gen. 2:24 "a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh" (emphasis added).¹

The patriarchal society did not prohibit polygamy, but neither did it encourage it. Its practice was mainly due to the continuity of the family (Gen. 16:1-3; 30:1-5). Patriarchal families consisted not only of the patriarch, his wives and children, but also of such adult sons and daughters-in-law as had not formed separate households, the children of such unions, and family slaves. Failure to bear children, particularly sons, was a source of shame to the barren wife. By contrast, the trace of matriarchal

¹ All references are to the Revised Standard Version.

marriages is also observed in the cases of Jacob and Moses (Gen. 29:1-30; Exod. 2:21-22).

Marriage came about through a contract made by two men, the father of the bride and the father of the groom. Sometimes a brother of the bride might negotiate for the dowry, as in the case of Laban's barter with Isaac's servant over the hand of Laban's sister Rebekah (Gen. 24:28-61).

The most interesting custom of marriage in the Jewish tradition was Levirate marriage. The term levirate derives from the word levir that means "a husband's brother." The Levirate marriage must have been designed to keep the family name in Israel and prevent Israelite girls from marrying non-Israelites (Gen. 38).²

On the other hand, in Greek and Roman society monogamy was the only legitimate form of marriage.

Generally speaking, in both Hellenistic society and Roman society a woman was no longer totally subject by law to any man, whether it was her husband, her father, or her guardian.... it had become regularly possible for a woman to obtain a divorce when she wanted it.... However, a [Jewish] wife could not divorce her husband at all, although she could bring charges against him in the court and the court could force him to divorce her.³

In spite of such a curious marriage custom, Jewish women

² O. J. Baab, "Marriage," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, vol 3 (New York: Abingdon, 1962), 282.

³ David C. Verner, The Household of God (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983), 44-5.

seemed to have enjoyed larger freedom and power in regard to households than Greek and Roman women did.⁴ But interestingly enough, Hellenistic Jewish households seemed to be closer to pagan households rather than Jewish households at the time of the New Testament.⁵

Looking into the background of Jesus' time, the institution of celibacy was already popular among the sect of the Essenes. In spite of that, we cannot say that Jesus' view of celibacy (Matt. 19:12) exactly speaks for the Essenes' celibacy interpreted by Jewish scholars.⁶ Even though Jesus supported celibacy with various reasons, he did not intend to establish it as one of the institutions. Thus, Christian singles ought not to be looked down upon by married people nor neglected. The Bible supports both marriage and singlehood as human life forms (1 Cor. 7:25-40). Therefore, personal decision must be respected whatever the choice. Finally, it is noteworthy that the Bible consists of a good deal of different customs, cultures, and ideas. However, it is certain that since New Testament times, the status of the wife has been changed and moreover improved in response to the changes of society.

⁴ Ibid., 45.

⁵ Ibid., 47.

⁶ Geza Vermes, Jesus the Jew (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 100.

Bible writers believed that marriage was given by God as a special gift.

Biblical Meaning of Marriage

The Bible has three distinct concepts about marriage to support such views as the one in God's creation story, Jesus' view of marriage, and the view of Paul.

Creation Story

In the beginning, God was satisfied with a human being who was created in the image of God. Genesis 2 tells two consecutive stages of the creation of human beings: a male first and a female. The creation of a female was intended to cure man's loneliness because God loved him (Gen. 2:18).

Adam had everything but a special human relationship. He could look upward, in a sense, and have a relationship with God. He could, in effect, look downward at the animals and have a relationship with them. But something was missing! God put that "something" into words when he said, "it is not good for man to live alone." Aloneness is the most hostile idea in the universe. It is a word of isolation.⁷

In that sense, a human being seems to be created for sociability. A human being is supposed to enjoy every type of human relationship. However, most of the people do not exercise their rights fully with regard to human relationship. Nevertheless, it is certain that a superficial human relationship can cause some types of

⁷ Gordon MacDonald, Magnificent Marriage (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 1978), 3.

loneliness at which God is not pleased, even though it is not exactly the same as Adam's loneliness before the creation of his partner.

God's creation of human beings certainly aims at establishing trustful, cooperative human relationships and living abundant lives. In doing so, the institution of marriage is one of a few best ways to fulfill God's will.

God was pleased to give Eve to Adam as a helper "fit for him" (Kenegdo). Von Rad writes, "The word Kenegdo... contains the notion of similarity as well as supplementation."⁸ He goes on to say that Eve is a worthy assistant, a mirror of himself, unlike animals in which Adam does not recognize himself.⁹ Speiser writes too "The Heb. complement means literally 'alongside him,' or 'corresponding to him.'"¹⁰ Thus, it must not be interpreted as an incomplete figure. The word "woman" (Gen. 2:23) in Hebrew is a complementary word to man. It hints at the idea that the two together form an even larger whole.

Most of the Old Testament scholars agree that Genesis 1

⁸ Gerhard von Rad, Genesis, rev. ed., trans. John H. Marks (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973), 82.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ E. A. Speiser, trans., Genesis (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964), 17.

and 2 are derived from different sources.¹¹ People who are used to the narrative of the Garden of Eden would tend to interpret Gen. 1:27 as the story of a male creation rather than that of a human being creation. Letty Russell supports my view: "The misunderstanding of this passage has often led to the assumption that man is the image of God and therefore God is masculine."¹² The dominant interpretation has kept step with this. But I believe the reason why the narrative of the Garden of Eden is placed after the six-day source by the editors (700 B.C.; Genesis 2 from Yawistic source 950 B.C. creation story) is that they understood this as the story of a human relationship, companionship, and sinfulness whereas the six-day creation story is one of creation.

In light of this interpretation, the story of a female creation must not be interpreted as supporting sexism and describing the creation. Because, as Russell writes, "nor is there any indication that sexuality is the key to the image."¹³ She goes on to say, "the Yawist version in Chapter 2 seems to indicate that, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, 'sexuality is nothing but the ultimate realization of

¹¹ James King West, Introduction to the Old Testament, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1981), 66-7.

¹² Letty M. Russell, The Future of Partnership (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979), 47.

¹³ Ibid., 46.

our belonging to one another.'"¹⁴

Therefore, Genesis 2 tells that a divine marriage enhances the intention of God's creation and is the conclusion of the creation process. An equal relationship between Adam and Eve was God's intention, but it was interrupted by their committing sins. Human beings are, therefore, to be reconciled with God in order to restore the right marriage which God eventually wants.

Jesus' View of Marriage

Even though Jesus' saying that marriage cannot be dissolved does not explain clearly what marriage is like,¹⁵ one thing is certain from his saying; that is, he is concerned about the stability of marriage. Why? Is his concern really with the stability rather than the quality of marriage?

Jesus starts the discussion of marriage by introducing the creation story of human beings as Paul does (Mark 19:6-9). The institution of marriage began with the appearance of human beings in the Garden of Eden. Thus, when marriage is understood to be an institution in which a wife must be enslaved to a husband, it is surely against the intention of the creation. Jesus says that each partner becomes one

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ The Gospel of Mark (10:9) prohibits divorce in any case whereas the Gospel of Matthew (19:9) allows it when adultery is involved.

in marriage. This means not one physical body or person, but "one body of marriage" where "each partner brings a uniqueness that enriches both" with "equal rights and responsibilities."¹⁶

Marriage begins in the "one-flesh" union established in a sexual relationship. There are two distinctly different opinions regarding the relationship between marriage and sexuality.

Emil Brunner asserts that marriage... represents an ethical solution to the problem of the relation between the sexes.... Sexuality...is sanctified only through marriage, unless one chooses total abstinence.... Brunner believes that the sexual drive under the power of sin is not likely to be controlled successfully, because it is basically an "unnatural" form of human existence.¹⁷

In contrast, Barth says

the sexual relation of man and woman has already been constituted a true order of humanity... as an integral part of total humanity as male and female. Marriage, as an exemplification of the total encounter... thus integrates sexuality into total humanity.¹⁸

It is certain that marriage is inseparable from sexuality, but Brunner's assertion that sexuality can be discussed or justified only in the context of marriage devaluates the

¹⁶ Joan Hunt and Richard Hunt, Growing Love in Christian Marriage: The Official Marriage Manual of the UMC (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 75.

¹⁷ Ray S. Anderson and Dennis B. Guernsey, On Being Family (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 86.

¹⁸ Ibid., 87.

meaning that sexuality, per se, is an important part of humanity. I believe sexuality needs to be more positively interpreted. Sexuality is understood not only from a sexual point of view, but also from the spiritual point of view. Then, "one-flesh" can be interpreted as the oneness or wholeness of humanity.

With a process of oneness in marriage, a couple grows. Jesus uses "unmask" or "a true person" as the standard to criticize the Pharisees and the oppressors of the people of Israel (Mark 7:6-13). His view of divorce is derived from this background. In other words, his view is that it is likely to protect vulnerable women from ruthless husbands who are concerned about only evading the Law skillfully without realizing the purpose of God's creation. Helmut Thielicke writes:

when what is thus "outwardly" constituted as a marriage breaks down, this is not simply a mere nothing, as if it had not existed at all. On the contrary it contains an offense against God's order of creation.¹⁹

To restore a right relationship with God, as Jesus says, human beings need to take off the mask and be like children. His emphasis on "unmask" or "a true person" implies what marriage ought to be even though he does not define it clearly. Thielicke writes again:

¹⁹ Helmut Thielicke, The Ethics of Sex, trans. John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 112.

when Jesus criticizes the "certificate of divorce" he is not setting up a new ordinance, but is rather recalling to mind the standard of all ordinances. Consequently, he is not concerned to proclaim a punitive law of creation (this would be a contradiction in itself!); he is rather uttering a call to repentance, which sets man down before the ultimate court of appeal....²⁰

God, who cares for the lost, is also concerned about our lives, including marriage. Marital relationships now must be based on unmasked, open relationships.

Paul's View of Marriage

Paul's view of marriage is related to his understanding of eschatology. The faith of the imminent eschatology lets him stress the unnecessary of marriage (1 Cor. 7:8). But his theology had been changed and developed in response to the change of the situation and the faith. With regard to divorce, Paul holds a different view from Jesus. Like Brunner's assertion, Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza writes, "even though Paul feels compelled to acknowledge marriage, his own personal ideal was the asexual life and the marriage-free state."²¹

But if the unbelieving partner desires to separate, let it be so, in such a case the brother or sister is not bound. For God has called us to peace. (1 Cor. 7:15)

In contrast with Jesus' absolute commandment, Paul puts

²⁰ Ibid., 110.

²¹ Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 224.

emphasis on peace according to his own biblical interpretation. Paul seems to believe that he can modify Jesus' teaching against divorce because of a missionary purpose.²² In that sense, his view of marriage had been changed in response to the change of the situation so that the gospel might be preached to all nations. Thieliicke says,

[Paul] does not wish to impose any burden of conscience or "lay any restraint" upon those he is addressing [1 Cor. 7:35]. Hence he leaves room for freedom to make other decisions and for different convictions.²³

Paul is concerned with especially the marital relationship in terms of love, commitment, and submission (Eph. 5:21-33).

A husband has to love his wife as he loves his own body (Eph. 5:32); whereas, a wife needs to submit herself to her husband. But such relationships must be based on the relationship between Jesus and the church. Then, a question arises from the premise, whether the relationship between Jesus and the church is equal or not. Or is this relationship pointing to commitment rather than equality? Or perhaps he was the ordinary man who reflected the contemporary view of marriage in regard to inequality. Although the contemporary discussion regarding Paul's real perception of the equality between male and female is not

²² Ibid., 222.

²³ Thieliicke, 123.

finished, at least there is a consensus that the equal relationship in marriage is explicitly declared in Paul's Letters. Fiorenza writes,

Gal. 3:28c does not assert that there are no longer men and women in Christ, but that patriarchal marriage--and sexual relationships between male and female--is no longer constitutive of the new community in Christ.²⁴

Paul seems to regard equal marriage as an important constituent to form such a new Christian community. Each spouse in such a Christian community is expected to play a role as an interdependent constituent rather than an independent. There is a need for love, commitment, and faithfulness, but not a need for the distinction between the sexes. Elizabeth Achtemeier writes the "headship [of a husband] is a function only, not a matter of status of superiority."²⁵

Perfect freedom does not lie in avoiding God's interference but rather being enslaved to God totally. In the same manner, though a couple's freedom seems to be restricted in a fully committed relationship, in fact, the couple may find full freedom only in such a relationship. Paul's word "slavery" does not mean the dysfunctional and unequal relationship, but means the slavery of love and

²⁴ Fiorenza, 211.

²⁵ Elizabeth Achtemeier, The Committed Marriage (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 86.

commitment (Gal. 4:7, 31; 5:13).

Marriage is, in fact, an intimate relationship in which two individuals of equal worth give up their independence, become interdependent, find their individuality strengthened and developed by their union.²⁶

That is the secret of marriage (Eph. 5:32). Therefore, God installs marriage so that we can become a whole person by it rather than lose our personalities.²⁷

Korean View of Marriage

The Far East Oriental countries such as China, Japan, and Korea share many similarities in terms of culture, history, political systems, etc. The similarities probably stem from Confucianism, which has dominated national beliefs for a long period of time. The teachings of Confucianism have also made a considerable contribution to forming Oriental concepts of marriage and family. According to Confucian teachings

the entire universe is viewed as one large family in which all things are interrelated and hierarchically ordered from the lowest man [sic] up to heaven. Heaven is viewed as the source of all and the ancestor of all things. All men [sic] are, therefore, subject to heaven and must conform to its natural ordering.²⁸

It is, thus, natural for Oriental people to give priority to

²⁶ Hunt and Hunt, 27.

²⁷ Achtemeier, 88.

²⁸ Dae H. Chung, "The Korean Family," Family in Asia, eds. Man Singh Da and Panos D. Bardis (London: Allen & Unwin, 1979), 288.

their nation rather than to themselves. In the same manner, Oriental people believe that one should always be ready to give up his or her individual concerns for the sake of a nation. Consequently, sexual gratification or attraction never enters into matrimonial issues for them. Marriage does not, therefore, serve to create a new family, but rather serves to continue the man's family line.²⁹

Despite such similarities shared by the people of China, Japan and Korea, there are also many differences among them. For instance, Korean marriage is distinctively the product of Korean history, geography, and culture. The Korean concept of marriage has changed in response to new situations in Korea. The Western view of marriage, which emphasizes individual love and companionship, has influenced Koreans considerably since the 1900s when Korea began to open its door to the Western world.

New, younger Korean generations are quickly moving toward the idea of emphasis on the individual's rights now more than ever before. They claim the right of free mate selection without parental interference. Even though the frequency of the arranged marriage is still as high as in the past, the process is now different in that couples' opinions are respected more than previously. The real

²⁹ Steven P. Shon and Davis Y. Ja, "Asian Families," Ethnicity and Family Therapy, eds. Monica McGoldrick, et al. (New York: Guilford, 1982), 211.

difference, I believe, lies in the change of the factors determining mate selection. The important factors in determining a Korean marriage selection are as follows: education, family background, wealth, etc. Among these, money is now the most powerful factor in arranging marriages. The old-time marriages were mainly concerned with family dignity, education and honor; whereas, today, even education is translated into money. The custom of Korean marriage now seems to follow the Western style of superficiality.

This change, however, does not necessarily mean that the traditional concept of Korean marriage has completely disappeared. Generally speaking, Korean society is still a hierarchical society. The Confucian customs, way of thinking, and tradition have deeply penetrated every corner of Korean society. Therefore, even if a husband tries to keep pace with an equal marriage, he will find many obstacles placed in his path by family members, the social structure and even his wife. Generally speaking, the Korean view of marriage is still a patriarchal one. By and large, Koreans bring just such an attitude with them when they emigrate to the United States.

Age at marriage is closely related to the economic situation in a given society. During the nineteenth century, men in the United States had to struggle for many

years before becoming independent providers; this situation delayed marriages. From the latter part of the nineteenth century until 1960, men and women married at a younger average age in the United States than they had in previous years. The economic development of the United States encouraged potential mates to disregard factors that had been important in the nineteenth century, i.e., becoming an independent provider.

Since the 1960s, however, the average age at marriage has begun to rise. This rise of age at marriage may be due to the fact that women college graduates tend to seek their self-actualization in work, and this delays marriage. The primary change in courtship behavior in the last ten years has been the rapid rise of cohabitation.³⁰ Such a trend implies that younger generations are trying to avoid a legal commitment and seek the reward-cost ratio,³¹ based on the exchange theory,³² in their cohabitation. Individual

³⁰ Bernard I. Murstein, "Mate Selection in the 1970s," Decade Review: Family Research, 1970-1979, ed. Felix M. Berardo (Minneapolis: NCFR, 1980), 54.

³¹ The reward-cost ratio is "if a husband wants certain rewards from his wife then he must provide the rewards that she wants (conform to her reward expectations); the same is true for her." John Scanzoni, Sexual Bargaining (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall/Spectrum, 1972), 63.

³² The social exchange theory is that "In the day-to-day processes of social exchange, they bargain with each in terms of the relative power they possess, and they arrive at certain decisions." Power rests on resources. Ibid., 67.

determinants work in marriage more strongly than before.
Such differences will surely drive Korean immigrants into
conflicting situations.

CHAPTER 3

Marital Conflicts

The American economic situation does not allow for Korean-American wives to stay at home. There are few exceptions to the fact that both a Korean-American husband and wife must be employed for survival. The new experience of dual careers brings about new dynamics in marriage and influences marital relationships both positively and negatively.

Power rests on resources, especially socioeconomic resources. Work brings such resources and naturally demands a new power distribution which Korean couples in Korea do not face. Thus, changes in marital relationships brought about by work and the resulting conflicts could endanger marital stability unless treated pertinently. The conflict stage is a crossroads determining whether the marriage will grow or end in ruin. Work, power and stability revolve around conflict.

Money and Work

Korean immigrants now live in a society in which money can openly be discussed between couples. Traditionally the

husband has been regarded as the provider; whereas, the wife has been thought of as the money manager. Job opportunities for women have been on the increase since World War II, but the notion of the husband as the provider has not changed much. Job opportunities, rights, or the amount of income for American women are not yet equal to those of men. A woman must still live under social and structural limits. Two factors have been important in driving American wives into the labor market. First, the American home economy in general does not allow a wife to stay home without contributing money to the home. Second, the wife wants achievement in work.

Therefore, in the last two decades women's participation in work has been continuously growing. There need to be more improvements in women's working environment. But it is assumed that the wife's attitude toward her work still is not at such a level that she depends upon that work for her identity. The reasons for this attitude are derived from many sources, such as social structure, sexism, and unconscientious women themselves. In addition to these, many wives are still not completely free from the household even when they are employed outside the home. They are living in a transitional period. In other words, double values apply to wives. They are still forced to follow a traditional role and yet adapt themselves to a

labor market at the same time. Actually, while most women are happy simply with being employed, men usually seek achievements from work because our society is still male dominated. Men tend to "segregate their emotional lives from their work lives."¹ When they come home from work, men expect comfort and peace, and regard these expectations as natural. If they do not get such expectations at home, men will be exhausted in work. These attitudes of men, in fact, impose upon their wives a responsibility to be faithful to the home rather than to work, e.g., "I am glad you have a job, but...."

In general, work not only means earning money but also lends identity and power to men.² Thus, most men invest themselves in work more than women do. A cost and reward rule in marriage works differently for a husband than it does for a wife. In a traditional society, such a difference is natural, acceptable, and works in a complementary way. In contrast, now men tend to stay in traditional society while women want to get out of it. Such a conflict makes the marital problems of our age worse.

We call our society a modern society, which means that it is moving toward an equal society. In fact, the power

¹ Philip Blumstein and Pepper Schwartz, American Couples (New York: Morrow, 1983), 157.

² Ibid., 76.

distribution of marriage depends on the form of the society. Hyman Rodman explains how the nature of the relationship between resources and the power of husbands is influenced by four stages of societies:

(1) patriarchy--no variation in male authority by status (India); (2) modified patriarchy--male authority inverse to status (Greece, Yugoslavia); (3) transitional equalitarianism--authority varies positively with status (Germany, U.S.A.); (4) equalitarianism--no necessary correlation of male power with authority since women also possess high levels of resources (Denmark, Sweden).³

If Rodman is correct about this, American society seems to grant more power to a higher status husband than to an ordinary homemaker. Even though men accept the wives' new roles in the household and equal power in decision making, they are still struggling with the sharing of housework and will resist it when their authority is challenged within the family. In general, wives and husbands seem to be happier in their relationships if the respective partners are successful in their jobs.⁴

We see the tendency for a wife to be viewed according to her husband's accomplishments. Work, thus, can be a good reason to make couples happy. But couples with dual careers may find it difficult to manage their time effectively,

³ John Scanzoni, "Social Processes and Power in Families," Contemporary Theories About the Families, vol 1, eds. Wesley R. Burr, et al. (New York: Free Press, 1979), 299.

⁴ Blumstein and Schwartz, 161.,

e.g., time spent together and time spent with their children. If a traditional wife's role is still enforced, dual career couples will face worse problems than single career couples. But I believe that marriage and family dynamics are determined by how partners understand each other's roles. Thus, there is a need for a new definition of the sex roles which is fitted into each home. However, if a wife seeks a new role in work, she will find the existence of many new or old obstacles at home as well as in work. This is the dilemma to be overcome by women in Rodman's third stage of society. An equal power may be an ideal goal at this time. But, it is not easy to divide power equally.

To conclude, a wife's work is certain to affect a couple's relationship both positively and negatively. But the quality of the marriage is not necessarily related to whether the wife is employed or not.

Power Struggle

Cromwell and Olson begin their book by stating that "power is one of the most fundamental aspects of all social interactions."⁵ Marriage has been assessed by love, intimacy, and resources, etc., but to now view marriage from the power perspective will surely be useful to reveal the

⁵ Ronald E. Cromwell and David H. Olson, "Power in Families," Power in Families, eds. R. Cromwell and D. Olson (New York: Halsted, 1975), 3.

veiled aspect of it. It may be uncomfortable to hear the delineation that marriage can be understood as a kind of power struggle. In fact, the use of power happens continuously in our lives without our even knowing it. Robert Blood and Donald Wolf state: "The most important aspect of family structure is the power position of the members."⁶ This statement can be applied to marriage without any difficulties. How do a wife and husband divide power in their marriage? How often and how much does a partner try to influence or exercise power over the spouse in everyday life? From where does power come? These questions are important in making a better marriage. Scanzoni criticizes the tendency of most power research to focus on power as static. He argues that power research should be refocused to concentrate on the power process. McDonald supports Scanzoni by saying that, "power is dynamic rather than static, and therefore involves reciprocal causation...."⁷ Power is not the outcome of a marriage interaction, but the process of a marriage interaction.⁸ In other words, the interaction of power in marriage depends

⁶ Cited in Cromwell and Olson, 4.

⁷ Gerald W. McDonald, "Family Power: The Assessment of a Decade of Theory and Research," Decade Review: Family Research, 1970-1979, ed. Felix M. Berardo. Journal of Marriage and the Family [special issue] 42, no. 4 (Nov. 1980): 113.

⁸ Scanzoni, "Social Processes," 304.

on each partner's dynamics.

The idea of power may be used interchangeably with a variety of concepts such as force, authority, strength, control, and influence.⁹ Power is used in persuading and changing another's behavior.

Cromwell and Olson divide power into three domains. Power basis refers to the sources of power and is synonymous with resources. Examples of resources are economic, personal, effective, and cognitive. Power processes refers to the interaction techniques which individuals employ in their attempts to gain control in the negotiation and decision making process. Power outcomes addresses the question of who makes the final decision or who wins.¹⁰ The authors note that power and conflict should be kept as distinct as possible even though in many instances they occur together.

The resource exchange theory of Ungar and Edna Foa has become the predominant orientation in family power and decision-making research. It involves the interaction of rewards and costs and has been applied to our lives either consciously or unconsciously.

In fact, the rewards and costs rule is not new to every couple but discovered only recently. Although a husband's

⁹ Cromwell and Olson, 5.

¹⁰ Ibid., 5-7.

expectation of a wife's role changes in response to the change of the society, the basic idea of that rule does not change at all. A traditional society tends to view this rule from the material resources perspective, i.e., whoever owns more resources can use more power. Naturally, more power is given to the husband. In contrast, a modern society does not understand this rule from such a perspective but as a more composite one.

The balance of power is affected not only by material resources, but also by emotional and psychological factors. Family counselors Foa and Foa state that humans have needs for resources of love, status, services, information, goods, and money for the quality of life.¹¹

However, additional research suggests that

Love is the most particularistic resource, since its value is most influenced by the particular person and the relationship of the exchange partners. Money is the most universalistic resource, since its value is least influenced by the person from whom it is received.¹²

Exchange of money is a zero-sum game. Zero-sum means if one wins, the other loses. The question is whether power belongs to a zero-sum game or not. The assumption that power arises from material resources such as money supports

¹¹ Cited in Kathryn D. Rettig and Margaret M. Bubolz, "Interpersonal Resource Exchanges as Indicators of Quality of Marriage," Journal of Marriage and the Family 45, no. 3 (Aug. 1983): 498.

¹² Rettig and Bubolz, 498.

the idea that power is governed by a zero-sum game rule.¹³

When a husband uses more power than his wife in the stage of power processes, that is, decision making, she will naturally use less power to make a decision than her husband. But love is not governed by a zero-sum game rule.¹⁴ Even though a husband may feel that he is receiving more love than he is giving, his wife may not feel that she is losing love and may even feel the same as her husband. Love is not something to be divided, but used to unify, support, and provide help for one another. In the same manner, the balance of power is not simply decided by a zero-sum game.

Power distribution is as mysterious as love. Since power distribution is determined by various variables such as culture, tradition, value, and marital relationship, it is very difficult to divide power clearly in marriage. In spite of such a difficulty concerning power distribution, money (money-oriented culture) among those variables can be the most affective. To most couples, money represents power.

Even though a large income does not translate into simple power, a large income earner expects more power than does a low income earner. If power distribution is simply

¹³ Ibid., 499.

¹⁴ Ibid., 499.

decided by how much money each partner earns, a wife must be frustrated in this society. It must be a dilemma for a wife who claims an exact power distribution in accordance with the economic ability of each partner. In addition, even if a wife earns more money than her husband, she will not necessarily acquire an appropriate amount of power in this society. Then, she may use a manipulative power, with the intent of influencing her husband from a different approach.¹⁵

Conflicts

Conflict may be defined as disagreement or disharmony between two parties, or even the opposition of each other's desire. There has been a tendency to view conflict as bad and stability as good. The view that conflict is dysfunctional has forced couples to hide their conflicts. But recent family studies agree that marital conflict is the natural process of an intimate relationship only when it is an overt conflict. As Jean Miller writes:

If subordinates do not accept their place as inferior or secondary, they will initiate open conflict.... This can lead to discomfort, anxiety, and even more serious reactions for both parties. The hope, however, is that interaction between two resourceful and competent adults can bring the needs of both people close to fulfillment.¹⁶

¹⁵ Blumstein and Schwartz, 103.

¹⁶ Jean Baker Miller, Toward a New Psychology of Women (Boston: Beacon, 1976), 17.

"Verbal conflict between intimates is not only acceptable.... [but] constructive and highly desirable."¹⁷ In other words, no conflicts between couples does not always mean they maintain good marriages. In fact, the more important fact is how to deal with conflicts.

Then the question arises, "How and from where do such marital conflicts originate?" First of all, a couple's different expectations can bring about a conflict. Each partner expects a certain amount of rewards from the other when he or she invests something valuable.¹⁸ If such expectations are not satisfied, he or she will force a conflict.

When do couples feel satisfied? What kinds of rewards do couples expect from each other? Since satisfaction is very subjective, the degree and kind of conflict depends on each marriage. Most conflicts are likely to lead couples to marital crisis unless there is a preventive action. This is called "a covert conflict" by Miller, who explains:

These relationships are not based on increasing openness and reciprocity; they contain a large element of deception and manipulation; there is often quite obvious reciprocal condescension.¹⁹

¹⁷ George Bach and Peter Wyden, The Intimate Enemy (New York: Avon, 1970), 17.

¹⁸ Scanzoni, Sexual Bargaining, 101.

¹⁹ Miller, 14.

Crisis may be a more problematic stage than conflict. Crisis has double aspects, like a conflict, which are negative and positive. The Chinese word "crisis" is composed of two letters: danger and opportunity.²⁰ Therefore, when the conflict and crisis are healed, a more stable marriage can be expected.²¹

There are two kinds of conflict: personal conflict and structural conflict.

Personal Conflict

The presence of differences between couples does not automatically lead to a conflict. If a couple genuinely accepts each other "as is," there will be nothing to fight about. Personal conflict actually depends upon a couple's dynamics. Since it is subjective, the observational data do not provide us with enough clues to establish a clear theory. Personal conflicts to some extent are common to everybody, regardless of social structure. But as long as we consider the fact that the personality is formed under a certain environment, personal conflict also seems to relate to the social environment in some respects. It is, thus, hard to distinguish between the personal conflict and the structural conflict.

²⁰ Howard J. Clinebell, Jr. and Charlotte H. Clinebell, The Intimate Marriage (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 11.

²¹ Ibid., 11.

Lewis Coser calls the personal conflict "nonrealistic." This kind of conflict may consist of aggressive behavior, once again not directed toward change of a specific situation, but simply to release pent-up tensions and fulfill deep-seated needs.²² In addition, there has been a tendency to treat all conflicts as "nonrealistic."²³ The tendency presupposes that marriage simply consists of two individuals who are independent of a social structure. Then, it concludes that a conflict can be solved when the personality is changed.²⁴ That is the traditional approach toward conflict.

Structural Conflict

In recent years such a traditional view has been challenged. As we know from recent cultural studies, there has arisen a strong belief that every culture has its own uniqueness which must not be compared to that of any other. Yet, practically speaking, the reality of modern society is far from such a new theory. As Miller writes, "the dominant group is the model for 'normal human relationships,'"²⁵ and that directly applies to the United States. The dominant groups are interpreted as white and male. Miller goes on to

²² Cited in Scanzoni, Sexual Bargaining, 76.

²³ Ibid., 78.

²⁴ Ibid., 78.

²⁵ Miller, 8.

say, "Dominants prefer to avoid conflict--open conflict that might call into question the whole situation."²⁶ In American society, dominants tend to feel less conflicts than subordinates do from social structure.

Where does a structural conflict come from? Structural conflict originates because the total society is run by the dominant ideology. If subordinates want to survive, they have to adapt to the dominant culture. If not, they will be diagnosed unhealthy or even pathological. Some of the subordinates can adapt themselves to this well; others cannot.

Such a tendency may be applied to a couple in the same manner. some wives accept the male dominant ideology well; others do not. The more serious thing to realize, according to Jean Miller, is that those who experience a structural conflict tend to be interpreted as inferior or abnormal by the dominants. Therefore, to solve a structural conflict is not to use psychotherapy, but to correct the social structure or to educate those who feel conflict to change the structure. David Augsburger uses the terms internal and external responsibility corresponding to the terms personal and structural.²⁷

²⁶ Ibid., 9.

²⁷ David W. Augsburger, Pastoral Counseling Across Cultures (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 93.

He also asserts that there needs to be a clear distinction between internal and external, especially for ethnic minorities.

An internal response of accepting blame for one's failure may be both "normal" and appropriate for a middle-class white American, but for a black American in a lower economic setting such an internal responsibility process may be inaccurate, intrapunitive, and extreme. It is often inappropriate for a black male who is last hired and first fired to blame himself for the discrimination by asking, "What's wrong with my work, or with me as a person?"²²

Practically speaking, the lower economic group feels the gap between internal/external or personal/structural conflicts more keenly than the dominant group does.

Quality and Stability of Marriage

Quality

Because conflict contains both a positive and a negative aspect simultaneously, a low quality of marriage does not always result. Rather, conflict may be a natural stage on the way to a high quality of marriage.

Conflict may be placed somewhere between the quality and the stability of marriage or used as a bridge to connect them; because conflicts can threaten the stability of marriage, when conflicts are settled the quality of marriage becomes enhanced.

Marriage is assessed by two norms: stability and

²² Ibid., 94.

quality. Traditionally, the stability of marriage has been more appreciated than the quality of marriage in every society. It has been assumed that stability is good, regardless of quality. Now that assumption is being challenged because the egalitarian society places more emphasis on the quality of marriage than before. In fact, it is difficult to define the stability and the quality of marriage because both are very subjective to those who experience them.

Hicks and Platt write:

"Happiness," "success," "adjustment," and "satisfaction" are the terms most frequently used to delineate the subjective state of the marital relationship.²⁹

Even those terms are still subjective; when the happy feelings dominate married life, it can be said that those couples maintain the good quality of marriage.

Lewis and Spanier suggest that "a marriage of high quality would be one which has high marital adjustment, satisfaction, and happiness and which is an adequately functioning system."³⁰

Then, the question is, "What do marital quality and

²⁹ Mary W. Hicks and Marilyn Platt, "Marital Happiness and Stability," Journal of Marriage and the Family 32, no. 4 (Nov. 1970):554.

³⁰ Robert A. Lewis and Graham B. Spanier, "Theorizing about the Quality and Stability of Marriage," Contemporary Theories about the Families, 273.

happiness really mean?" I define a marriage of high quality as one which is full of intimacy, clear communication, self-growth, mutual support of spouse, etc. A good marriage encourages personality growth as well as the dynamics of interaction. If the purpose of the creation of two human beings is fully fulfilled in marriage, it is a high quality marriage.

Today, since the women's liberation movement of the 1960s, emphasis is placed on the quality of marriage but one tends to forget about pointing out the long process to achieve it. In other words, the good quality of marriage is not gained by accident, but produced or created by constant efforts of the partners. Even though the definition of marital quality is unclear, it is clear that the marriage of high quality is the fruit produced by means of constant efforts, not by accident.

There are two factors in determining the quality of marriage. One is a personal factor. Happiness is defined differently depending upon each person. To make a marriage of high quality, it is necessary to know one another's personality. While this is subjective and internal, the other factor is a socioeconomic one, which makes couples conceptualize what a marriage is externally. In other words, a social standard pushes couples to judge marriage in connection with their amount of wealth. The data show that

there is a positive relationship between marital happiness and higher occupational statuses, incomes, and educational levels for husbands; there is a positive relationship between husband and wife similarities in socioeconomic status, age, and religion; and there is a positive relationship between affectional rewards such as esteem for spouse.³¹

In contrast, Lewis and Spanier assert that marital happiness is not related to socioeconomic factors.

In other words, socioeconomic variables may no longer predict quality in intact marriages. Similarly, Jorgensen reported from his findings that multivariate analysis did not support earlier notions that higher levels of socioeconomic rewards lead to marriages which are any more satisfying or stable.³²

While the former seems to be based on the premise that general social phenomena are directly applied to marriage, the latter seems to be based on the fact that even socioeconomic factors become personal factors when those interact with persons.

I favor Hicks and Platt's assertion that marital happiness is closely related to money. Phenomenologically speaking, it seems that white groups feel happier than minority groups because the former (for the most part) live a better economic life than the latter.

³¹ Hicks and Platt, 562.

³² Graham B. Spanier and Robert A. Lewis, "Marital Quality: A Review of the Seventies," Decade Review, ed. Felix M. Berardo. Journal of Marriage and the Family [special issue] 42, no. 4 (Nov. 1980): 101.

Stability

Lewis and Spanier say that

marital stability is defined as the formal or informal status of a marriage as intact or nonintact. Strictly speaking, a stable marriage is one which is terminated only by the natural death of one spouse. An unstable marriage thus is one which is willfully terminated by one or both spouses.... most couples separate before a final decree, and an informal separation before divorce would be considered an unstable marriage.³³

In spite of that definition, it is not easy to know when a marriage is stable and when it is not. From the moment a couple start to consider a separation, marital stability is threatened. Traditional people tend to choose the stability of marriage rather than the quality of marriage when they have to choose one of the two. Such a tendency is not only affected by personality, but also by the social norms, which impose the stability upon people. A traditional society also tends to regard a stable marriage as a successful marriage.

The data show that marriage in America tends to be more stable among the white population than it does among those of the nonwhite population.³⁴ This indicates that marital stability is influenced considerably by social factors such as social status and money because we assume that white groups are better off than nonwhite groups. But the

³³ Lewis and Spanier, 269.

³⁴ Hicks and Platt, 566.

assumption that marriages of upper class, white groups are more stable than those of the middle class may not be supported because socioeconomic factors are not directly translated into marital stability or marital quality.

Ironically, recent reviews show that "many poorly adjusted marriages remain intact while many marriages with average or even relatively good adjustment may be terminated by divorce."³⁵ In contrast, there is an assertion that "marital quality and stability are highly correlated."³⁶

These two statements seem to be contradictory to each other. In fact, they reflect only the change of the social values. Generally speaking, the traditional society tends to prefer the stability of marriage to the quality of marriage. Even when a marriage in a traditional society seems to be threatened seriously, the marriage tends to remain intact. In other words, there is a low correlation between stability and quality.

In contrast, the egalitarian society, which puts equal emphasis on marital quality and stability or even prefers marital quality to stability, shows a high correlation of the two. Lewis and Spanier suggest four different types of marriage groups with regard to the relationship between stability and quality. Group I retains high quality and

³⁵ Lewis and Spanier, 271.

³⁶ Ibid., 271.

high stability while group II has high quality and low stability. Group III has low quality and low stability while group IV has low quality and high stability.³⁷

By and large, family studies have been concerned with group III.³⁸ The assumption of group III is that divorce results from a lack of intimacy and high stability of marriage means high quality of marriage. But recent studies report that low stability of marriage does not always mean low quality of marriage, and vice versa.³⁹ Therefore, the concern of the family studies should be moved from group III to IV. The marriage group IV may contain more problems than that of group III. If marriage is maintained in spite of serious marital problems, without any healing treatments, partners are likely to destroy each other's human dignity.

³⁷ Lewis and Spanier, 104.

³⁸ Ibid., 103.

³⁹ Ibid., 107.

CHAPTER 4
Analysis of Marital Conflicts Among Korean
Immigrants in the United States

History of Korean Immigrants

Korean laborers first arrived in Hawaii in 1903 to work on the sugar plantations as substitutes for the Chinese and to offset the Japanese workers. This immigration ended in 1905 as abruptly as it had started. During that period, a total of 7,226 immigrants had reached Hawaiian shores.¹ There were no further immigrants until 1965 when the Immigration and Naturalization Act abolished the national origins quota system. About two-thirds of the present Korean population of the United States arrived after 1965. Now, "Korean immigrants" in this paper refers to those later groups.

Korean immigrants are essentially different from the Asian and Europeans of the earlier period in American immigration history. These Koreans are well educated and highly skilled in their professions, unlike the first

¹ According to Won Yong (Warren) Kim as cited in Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim, Korean Immigrants in America (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 1984), 39-40.

generations of Chinese, Japanese or Europeans.²

As Hurh writes, "Slightly more than half of our respondents have already received college degrees in Korea before their emigration."³ Another statistic shows that 71.1 percent of all Koreans in America have completed high school, as compared with the United States average of 52.3 percent.⁴ The post-1965 Korean immigrants are from the urban middle class. Most of them were owners of small businesses, managers, white collar workers, or semiprofessionals. This means that they enjoyed social status in their homeland. But a considerable number of these now suffer from low social status in this country.

At the same time, we often hear "the success story of the Korean immigrants," but its truthfulness is suspect.⁵ For instance, a number of Korean immigrants run small businesses in the Los Angeles area. To the eyes of the Hispanic or the black communities, such Koreans may look like "Jews" when they open shops in a dangerous street without considering their lives. In addition, the conflict between Korean immigrants who run small businesses in the

² Ibid., 58-9.

³ Ibid., 58.

⁴ Ibid., 129.

⁵ Derald W. Sue, Counseling the Culturally Different (New York: Wiley, 1981), 114-17.

black community and the black residents often gives rise to serious trouble. The black community complains that Korean immigrants exploit them for money and do not contribute to their community at all. In contrast, Korean immigrants argue that running a small business in that area means risking life and thus their businesses do not belong to the success category. They insist that they work at least 15 hours a day for their business.

Therefore, the family life of Korean immigrants is totally a mess. They live for survival even when they reach economic success to some extent. Their nonverbal contract between couples is that someday, when the family reaches a firm financial status, the wife will stay home and work only in the household. But, looking into the course of the Korean immigrant struggle, it is assumed that their family lives accumulate more problems than the "success stories" would indicate. Many of them are undoubtedly suffering from mental problems or conflicts of various forms.

Adaptation Process

As Gordon Milton says, "cultural assimilation or acculturation is likely to be the first of the types of assimilation to occur when a minority group arrives on the scene."⁶ "Cultural assimilation" is usually the first to

⁶ Gordon Milton, Assimilation in American Life (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), 77.

occur after immigrants arrive in the new land and may not necessarily lead successfully to other adaptive processes, especially "social assimilation."⁷ In other words, even though the first generation, in general, may be able to live socially alienated from the dominant society, they cannot live without adopting the new culture of their new lives to some degree. As reported in some studies, "Even high socioeconomic status of immigrants is not necessarily related to social assimilation."⁸ The dominant groups force the subculture to be melted in a big pot whereas structurally they limit the subculture to join the society. With this adaptation process, we have three types of acculturations.

First, "a combination of unilateral and voluntary acculturation is what sociologists call cultural assimilation."⁹ This type of Korean immigrant holds to social participation as its most important value. But Sue says that this type of adjustment leads to an identity crisis because the minority individuals cannot completely rid themselves of their traditions and may lead a marginal existence at best. Generally speaking, the second generation belongs to that category. They feel shame about

⁷ Hurh and Kim, 25.

⁸ Ibid., 26.

⁹ Ibid., 74.

the fact that their parents do not understand American society or speak English fluently. The best example is observed in the Japanese second generation who had experienced living in concentration camps during World War II. Their interracial marriage rate (with white groups) reached over 50 percent in 1970.

Secondly, "a combination of unilateral and involuntary acculturation would be deculturation."¹⁰ Kim calls it a nativistic movement. This type of Korean immigrant emphasizes his/her own cultural heritage. Good examples are the Chinatown and Koreatown. The first generation belongs to this category. They have severe conflict with the second generation. Resistance to parental ways approaches open defiance. In general, the first generation is resistant to change. In fact, they greatly need acceptance and understanding from the dominant society. In other words, in spite of their resistance to change, if American society tries to understand their unique situation and to wait with patience until they by themselves join in American society, they will contribute something valuable to the American society.

Thirdly, "a combination of bilateral and voluntary acculturation may be cultural pluralism or 'democratic

¹⁰ Ibid., 74.

acculturation.'"¹¹ Sue calls it the "Yellow Power Movement."

The roots of the Asian American movement spring from two main sources. The first lies in the need to attain self pride in one's racial and cultural identity by reversing the trend of negativity instilled in them by white society. Second, the Asian American movement has strong political connotations in that the problems of minorities are seen to reside in society. The Asian American may become extremely militant in his/her concern with racism and civil rights.¹²

This type of identity must be the ultimate goal of the ethnic minority in the United States. Even though they have experienced various mental and physical sufferings in the course of seeking their identity, ethnic minorities are ready to participate in the American society without having shame about their color. This type of Korean immigrant may be observed in the third generation. The first and the second types should be guided to reach the third type.

Marital Conflict of Korean Immigrants

Most Korean immigrants bring with them the male dominant role from Korea. Such an authoritative male dominant position begins to be uprooted in the American society. It causes conflicts in marriages. A Korean husband may feel the worst frustration and resist the cultural assimilation the strongest among the family

¹¹ Ibid., 74.

¹² Sue, Counseling the Culturally Different, 123.

members. In addition, a Korean wife feels frustration no less than her husband because her husband's frustration threatens the marital quality and she must be employed, unlike the Korean situation. As Hurh and Kim write, "the degree of cultural ambivalence and conflict seems relatively higher for Asian immigrants than for European immigrants."¹³

Money and Work and Their Implications

for Korean Immigrants

While American wives choose a job for two reasons, i.e., home economy and self-accomplishment, Korean wives are likely to choose a job for survival only at the beginning of their immigration. Although the average income of Korean immigrants is higher than that of Americans, the former seem not to be rewarded rightly regarding their education and experiences. The exchange theory states that "a social interaction is viewed in terms of the rewards and costs the actors mediate for each other."¹⁴

If rewards are not returned as expected, people will suffer. Korean immigrants will blame the social structure for such small rewards. In addition, in more complex relationships, the exchange processes become more complicated, subtle, unconscious, and frequently irrelevant.

¹³ Hurh and Kim, 75.

¹⁴ Cromwell and Olson, "Multidisciplinary Perspective of Power," Power in Families, eds. Cromwell and Olson, 19.

If we agree to call the immigrant life complex, it is probably difficult to apply the exchange theory directly to the immigration situation. For instance, a question arises, "How can a Korean wife's disadvantaged role in marriage be solved?" Because, even though she is employed, her rewards returned by her husband are not better than in Korea. If a Korean wife's demand for right is not responded to by her husband, she will withdraw her demand and endure suffering internally or fight against it more strongly. Sometimes, immigration means a simple change of living condition to a Korean husband whereas a job means a heavy burden to a Korean wife. Not only is work experience outside the home very new to her, but there are too many obstacles to overcome such as language, sexism, and social adaptation. Therefore, in some senses, a Korean wife lives an American life outside the home while she is forced to live as a Korean woman at home.

Power Struggle and Its Implications
for Korean Immigrants

Most Korean husbands seem to consent to a relocation of power with their wives to the degree that their status in the family is not seriously hurt. In a society changed from traditional to egalitarian, women tend to accept their new role faster and to be more liberal than do men. Korean wives who become Americanized faster than their husbands

will experience more conflicts with unjust power distribution. In addition, when the definition of power distribution is unclear, a marital conflict gets worse. Power distribution is closely related to the decision making process--who influences the final decision the most?¹⁵ An equal power distribution and a traditional marriage cannot go together. The first generation of Korean immigrant couples tend to view "equal power distribution" from the Korean traditional standpoint. In doing so they mix power distribution and a tradition marriage at their own will. Then, a winner may be a husband only. Because as Colleen Johnson says,

If the norms of the group strongly support the husband's right to power, such power becomes legitimized and transformed into authority, where it is not necessarily exercised on a day-to-day basis.¹⁶

A husband manipulates his wife's demand for power by means of authority. Authority seems to be based on the value of a traditional society. Further, "authority has its source in the cultural system and its norms, while power stems from group functioning and the enactment of social roles."¹⁷ Even if a certain amount of power is given to a wife,

¹⁵ Scanzoni, Sexual Bargaining, 64.

¹⁶ Colleen L. Johnson, "Authority and Power in Japanese-American Marriages," Power in Families, eds. R. C. Cromwell and D. Olson, 191.

¹⁷ Ibid., 183.

authority will not be given to her at all by a Korean husband. Therefore, defining power without understanding authority may lead one to a wrong conclusion in the Korean immigration context. To conclude, a traditional husband's role in marriage is supported by authority, whereas a wife's role is severely weakened by it. Then, such a relationship develops into conflicts.

Conflict and Its Implications
for Korean Immigrants

"In general, the level of education is positively related to the degree to which our respondents [Korean immigrants] are socially assimilated."¹⁸ American college graduates among Korean immigrants are comparatively less segregated from whites in their work place than are the noncollege graduates. In spite of that, "ethnic attachment remains largely unaffected by their length of residence in the United States or the level of education."¹⁹ Such an ambivalence remains in the minds of Korean immigrants regardless of their social status, and in those of most Asian-Americans too. In light of the Korean situation that women usually do not work outside the home, to live in the United States is quite a burden, especially to Korean women. In addition, they are still responsible for housework the

¹⁸ Hurh and Kim, 92.

¹⁹ Ibid., 98.

same as when they are not employed outside the home.

In work, they often experience some kinds of discrimination derived from their language difficulties or color. Such burdens will affect their marriages negatively and lead to conflict. That is a structural conflict which they had never experienced in Korea. If their present income or social status is not as high as that which they enjoyed in Korea, the conflict will worsen.

Hurh and Kim report in their book that the occupation of the respondents had not reached the level of their preimmigration occupation.²⁰ But most Korean immigrants seem to have endured such hard times well and have become satisfied with their incomes.

According to data, crises in regard to life satisfaction and marriage begin to arise after the first five to six years of living in the United States. The first five to six years do not allow consideration of the quality of marriage. Couples are only concerned about settling down during that period. When economic pressures are gone to some extent, to start to consider the marriage may be too late to restore it. Korean immigrants' role conflicts in the family stem from a new socioeconomic environment. Therefore, such conflicts may not be corrected by psychotherapeutic treatment, but by a structural one.

²⁰ Ibid., 106 (Table 9.4).

Marital Quality and Stability and Those

Implications for Korean Immigrants

Most Korean immigrants are likely to belong to group IV, which is low quality and high stability. As we saw before, the Korean way of arranged marriages tends to favor marital stability which represents a family continuity more than marital quality, and expects that partners must strive to match themselves to each other.

In contrast with that, the American marriage seems to have moved in a different direction, especially during the last decade. Such cultural differences between the two countries drives Korean immigrants into a corner--whether to follow the Korean custom or the American one.

Middle-aged Korean couples who grew up in Korea tend to maintain a marriage as long as the quality of the marriage is not so bad that they cannot endure it. Such an attitude supports the old notion that a successful marriage is assessed by its stability, regardless of its quality. But demographic data show that the divorce rate among Korean immigrants is steadily increasing.²¹ Even though the younger generations of Korean immigrants contribute to the increase of that rate considerably, middle-aged Korean couples are suffering from the norms of their new cultural environment, which is that marital quality is more

²¹ "Korean American Families in the U.S.," 1.

appreciated than marital stability. Serious conflicts in Korean immigrants' marriages do not usually develop into crises, that is to say, divorce. Such marriages may carry more problems than group II (high quality/low stability) unless an appropriate measure is conducted.

CHAPTER 5
Pastoral Counseling for the Conflict
of Korean Immigrants

Goal of Conflict Counseling

Every type of counseling ultimately intends to resolve the conflicts of counselees. Therefore, the term "conflict counseling" may not make clear what type of counseling it is. But I will use the term "conflict counseling" in this project to indicate counseling which attempts to resolve marital conflicts for the time being.

As Howard Clinebell's growth formula indicates,¹ when a conflict passes through confrontation with caring, it can be a growth opportunity. Therefore, the goal of conflict counseling is not just to be content with resolving conflicts, but to lead a counselee to utilize a conflict as a growth opportunity. A conflict is not automatically translated into a growth opportunity. Rather, a conflict or crisis always has a two-directional tendency in the beginning stage.² A person can move toward or away from

¹ Howard Clinebell, Growth Counseling (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 55.

² Howard Clinebell, Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling, rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), 187.

wholeness. Then, the matter is not to talk about a conflict itself, but how to manage it constructively. If one learns to deal with a conflict constructively, he/she feels less stress than a person who does not do this well. The goal of conflict counseling is to facilitate the holistic development of his/her life. Holistic health is well explained by Clinebell's six dimensions of growth.³ When a person loses even one of the six dimensions, that person's holistic health does not develop well. Ultimately, holistic health moves toward spiritual growth.

Korean immigrants are placed in a new situation where the East and the West cross and often conflict. Such a situation challenges them to reconsider holistic health--What is a new definition of ideal life to us? Therefore, conflict counseling should lead them to learn about their situations, to cope with conflicts and to ultimately control them.

Korean immigrants came to the United States with the hope of establishing a new family life as well as a new Korean community. Such a hope can sustain them to endure conflicts, whatever they are, and enable them to look at those conflicts from a different perspective. Now a conflict is not just a problem to worry about, but a challenge to promise a new Korean community in the United

³ Clinebell, Growth Counseling, 19-37.

States. Thus, the purpose of conflict counseling for Korean immigrants is not only to provide a remedy but also to present spirituality and vision toward a bright future for this ethnic minority in the United States.

Method of Conflict Counseling

As I mentioned before, conflict counseling is a general term so it needs to be specified. When it is applied to marriage conflicts, it is called marriage conflict counseling. Such a counseling type contains two aspects: structural conflict counseling and personal conflict counseling.

I am sure that Korean immigrants' marriage conflicts should be dealt with from a structural conflict counseling perspective. Although their conflicts stem from the interaction of personal and structural factors, to Asian immigrants structural factors seem to affect their lives stronger than personal ones do. "Culture," in relation to my work, implies a composite entity which consists of customs, values, identity, language, sex role, social environment, etc. In other words, culture is the content of a social structure.

It is natural for Korean immigrants to experience conflicts through the many cultural changes. "Immigration" seems like planting trees in a foreign land. The trees endure a long period of suffering in order to bear fruits.

In the same manner, the first generations have to pass through such time to shape a new identity. Even though they try to do their best, conflicts are inevitable.

Therefore, many Asian immigrants attempt to change their personalities rather than the social structure, because they feel unable to change the structure. Derald Sue describes three types of models in relation to a cultural change.

First, individuals may remain "loyal" to their own ethnic group by retaining traditional values.... Second, the individuals who are caught up in a culture-conflict may often times attempt to become overwesternized by rejecting traditional Asian values. Third,... [individuals attempt] to develop a new identity that will enable [them] to reconcile viable aspects of [their] heritage with the present situation.⁴

The most desirable type is the third, which comes about by a meeting of two different cultures. Here the process seeks not simply to mix or add values, but instead to create a synthesis resulting from thesis and antithesis interaction. Such a result only grows out of conflicts. Thus, the effective management of conflicts is essential. On the other hand, it is true that Korean immigrants' personal or mental conflicts can at the same time be structural conflicts. Such conflicts are not resolved only through personal conflict counseling or psychotherapeutic

⁴ Derald Sue, Counseling the Culturally Different, 122-23.

counseling, but by a structural conflict counseling which includes personal conflict counseling methods. Their conflicts belong to the phases of personal crises described in the book, Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling.⁵ In addition, cultural changes are not developmental events, but unexpected (accidental) ones.

There are many therapeutic ways of counseling in structural conflict counseling. Among these, this project focuses on educative counseling because Korean immigrants are living in a confused value system.

First of all, accurate information about the Korean-American situation is necessary. Educative counseling has three goals:

- (1) discovering what facts, concepts, values, beliefs, skills, guidance, or advice are needed by persons in coping with their problems; (2) communicating these directly or helping persons discover them; (3) helping persons utilize this information to understand their situations, make wise decisions, or handle problems constructively.⁶

Korean immigrants need to analyze their respective situations in order to discover what conflicts mean to them. They believe that it is impossible to change American society. Thus, what educative counseling can do is educate Korean immigrants to see their situations accurately and

⁵ Clinebell, Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling, 185-86.

⁶ Ibid., 325.

encourage them to attempt to change American society's view of Korean immigrants. As a part of such goals, educative counseling focuses on shaping a new identity for Korean immigrants. Identity crisis comes about when there is a serious gap between how one sees oneself and how others see oneself.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that just because the Korean-American population is increasing, this alone does not guarantee the qualitative growth of the Korean community. In order to put all Korean-Americans into a single ideological category in the Korean community, there needs to be a cooperative spirit which will enable them to feel that all members support each other.

In fact, it is not easy to maintain such a huge community without constant efforts. Structural conflict counseling serves to provide a goal and a direction toward a new community beyond their living condition.

Counselor and Counselee

Counseling occurs when a counselor and a counselee have a trusting relationship. Generally speaking, a counselor's color is not the determining factor in an effective counseling session as long as he/she tries to understand a counselee's human dignity and cultural heritage, even if that counselor is not accustomed to such aspects. Augsburger describes the three types of responses by the

culturally different counselor: sympathy, empathy, and interpathy.

Sympathy is the spontaneous response to another's emotional experience, which wells up as the other's pain evokes memories of similar hurts in the past
 Empathy is an intentional affective response rather than the spontaneous automatic reaction of sympathy;
 Interpathy is an intentional cognitive and affective envisioning of another's thoughts and feelings from another culture, worldview, epistemology.⁷

So sympathetic attitude seems to reflect cultural superiority whereas an interpathic counselor tries to have an equal relationship with culturally different counselees.

Although the counselor's color and language play an important role in a counselor-counselee relationship, the most important factor influencing such a relationship is understanding differences about the ideology of the society. There is still a question about how much even an interpathic counselor (who is a white, middle-class) can free him/herself from the bondage of the ideology. But as long as he/she tries to understand and respect another's feeling and thoughts from another culture, a counselee is not likely to terminate counseling.⁸

A wrong definition of identity can lead Korean

⁷ Augsburg, 27-31.

⁸ Clinebell, Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling, 96-101.

immigrants to regard their conflicts derived from cultural changes as their mental illness, or inferior cultural heritages. Therefore, an educative counselor helps them utilize their valuable cultural heritages to meet conflicts. We tend to forget the fact that identity crises do not only occur from the conflict between the Korean community and whites, but also from conflicts within the Korean community itself.

As long as Korean immigrants maintain an unclear understanding about their own situation, a change of an individual's attitude is still far from solving the problems which originate from structural factors.

Therefore, an educative counseling action must not remain at an individual level, but must extend to the Korean community as a collective counseling action. If not, the Korean community may be split and drift apart at the mercy of inharmonious voices. In addition to that, Korean immigrants will find more difficulties in escaping from conflicts such as identity crisis, mental problems, and loss of self-respect.

A white, middle-class counselor should (more or less) have a preunderstanding about the Korean definition of mental illness to counsel Korean immigrants. Traditionally, mental problems have been brought to the Shaman. Koreans feel that it is shameful to speak of family crises or mental

problems. Shon and Ja say that to bring a problem to an outsider such as a therapist may be shameful.⁹ In addition to that, another negative factor at work in a counseling session is, as Sue writes, that the

middle-class counselor's predominantly individualistic and intrapsychic orientation has tended to minimize the significance of the social and cultural forces that affect many Black clients' live.¹⁰

For instance, a Western concept of marriage indiscriminately applied to Korean-American marital problems by a white counselor, will bring about early termination of the counseling. Such a counseling approach seems likely to resist American pluralism, which respects each cultural uniqueness, and merely provides a counselee with a surface solution. In addition, he/she may believe that the problems of culturally different counselees derive from their inferior cultures.

Variables

The variables in counseling Korean immigrants are as follows: years of living in the United States, current occupation, previous occupation in Korea, fluency in speaking English, identity, sex, etc. The age of a counselor is sometimes an important factor when the age

⁹ Shon and Ja, 221.

¹⁰ Derald Sue, Counseling the Culturally Different, 166.

difference between a counselor and a counselee is very wide, because Koreans tend to regard old as wise.

It is said that persons from "authority-centered ethnic and cultural groups" expect concrete advice from a counselor.¹¹ This may be true for Asians in some senses. But such an oversimplification is not always true. In addition to that, when counseling occurs between Korean-Americans, all parties should be aware of Korean-American customs and behaviors. If a Korean counselor treats a Korean counselee only with Western language and gestures, that counselor may feel uncomfortable in counseling. Above all, I believe that the most important element of counseling is a counselor's attitude toward a counselee. As Sue and McKinney suggest, "The inadequacy of the mental health care delivery system to respond to minorities may result in premature termination of therapeutic services...."¹² In the same manner, if a white counselor tends to diagnose the marital conflicts of ethnic counselees as pathological, the counseling would terminate prematurely too. In fact, being adjusted seems to be highly prized in this society. As John

¹¹ Clinebell, Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling, 97.

¹² Stanley Sue and Herman McKinney, "Asian Americans in the Community Mental Health Care System," in Asian-Americans: Social and Psychological Perspectives, vol 2, eds. R. Endo, S. Sue and N. W. Wagner (Ben Lomond, Calif.: Science & Behavior Books, 1980), 224.

Sanford indicates, "to be healthy is to be adjusted, and the goal of most therapy is to return a person to a satisfactory mode of functioning in society."¹³ Maladjustment is equated with abnormality and unhealthiness. Then the question is, "What if the society itself is sick?" In spite of such a negative observation, the existing inadequate counseling system can be strengthened by an interpathic counselor who tries to sense minorities' feelings based on their culture.

Church as a Counseling Institution

It is said that Koreans are very religious. Many Korean immigrants who were never affiliated with churches in Korea regularly attend Korean ethnic churches in the United States. As Hurh and Kim say, they anticipate "peace of mind" from the churches.¹⁴ Comparing their present lives with their lives in Korea, it is certain that the standard of living in America is higher than it was in Korea; their present emotional and spiritual condition is not so. Therefore, they go to church. The church is the easiest place to contact them and the best place to counsel them, if it functions well.

Hurh points out three major reasons why the ethnic church is a focal point of social interaction for Korean

¹³ John A. Sanford, Healing and Wholeness (New York: Paulist, 1977), 8.

¹⁴ Hurh and Kim, 131.

immigrants in the United States. First, "the immigrants' need for a religious or spiritual (Christian) fellowship."¹⁵ The second reason for the immigrants participation is "the inclusive [social] nature of the church."

Regardless of sex, age, or socioeconomic status, every Korean immigrant is invited to join the ethnic church; whereas other voluntary associates have specific requirements for membership such as age, school, and locality.¹⁶

The third reason why immigrants are drawn to their ethnic church involves the "idea and practice of religious pluralism inherent in the American society."¹⁷

In other words, religious distinctiveness is welcomed in this pluralistic American society rather than racial and ethnic separatism. In addition, the religious distinctiveness "has been found to be the most convenient vehicle for enhancing and preserving ethnic culture and identity."¹⁸

Unfortunately, the majority of Korean ethnic churches focus on quantitative church growth and devotional matters rather than participating in the American society. Although a religious, mental catharsis is an important function of

¹⁵ Ibid., 134.

¹⁶ Ibid., 135.

¹⁷ Ibid., 135.

¹⁸ Ibid., 136.

Christian churches, sometimes such a function may serve to make the members forget their situations. In addition to that, the ethnic church can be a sectarian group when the third reason, which includes "preserving ethnic culture and identity," is misunderstood. Unless Korean ethnic churches establish a firm immigration theology, the churches may provide them only with opium. It is urgently necessary for Korean ethnic churches to take the initiative in creating an immigration theology for a new Korean community.

The Korean immigration theology is based on the firm conviction that God acts uniquely in the process of Korean immigration. Thus, it is the social-historical dimension of theology. Because some Korean scholars and organizations are beginning to tackle the issue, it is expected that there will be good results in the near future. Just as the history of the Israelites is a migration history, that of Korean immigrants can be God's history. Just as God called out Abraham of Haran to move to Palestine,¹⁹ Koreans are called to the United States to establish a new community. Identity crisis comes about when an ethnic minority feels inferior to the dominant culture. In contrast, if one has a firm vision about a new world, he/she can contribute something valuable to the American society.

¹⁹ Gen. 12:1-9.

Strengths of Pastoral Crisis Counseling

Contrary to secular counseling, pastoral counseling often occurs in an informal setting. Informal pastoral counseling takes place anywhere and anytime even without the request of the parishioners.²⁰ Such an easy contact for the minister brings many distinctive strengths in pastoral crisis counseling.

First, pastoral crisis counseling often has a preventive function for the parishioners' crises. The minister can take quick action even in the early stage of crisis because he/she always keeps in touch with the congregation. The fact that most Korean ministers focus on home visitation will make them very effective in moving toward this goal.

Secondly, pastoral crisis counseling is effective with the parishioners in low socioeconomic groups. This is suggested by Howard Stone when he discusses crisis intervention.²¹ Such people tend to hesitate to visit a secular counseling center because of its unfamiliar system, high cost, and a bad preconception about it.

In addition to that, the fact that white, middle-class ideology dominates the secular counseling theory may lead

²⁰ Clinebell, Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling, 190.

²¹ Howard W. Stone, Crisis Counseling (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 28.

them to feel stress through the counseling session. The Korean-American community tends to view the Korean pastors of its community as middle class. Therefore, there needs to occur a change in the pastors' attitudes in order to get in touch with the blue-collar class of Korean-Americans. As Jesus came to preach good news to the poor, out-reach ministry to the poor is absolutely required for Korean pastors to overcome the middle-class image.

Thirdly, a pastoral crisis counselor seeks to help the parishioners utilize ~~the~~ their own resources at hand such as families and extended families with whom he/she is already familiar.^{ee} A counselor can thus provide them with a quick solution. In addition to that, the congregation can be utilized as a support group,^{ee} which has a continual basis. Such pastoral crisis counseling will not end in first-aid treatment only. By utilizing the existing resources, a crisis situation will be removed quickly without spending much time on seeking resources or reconstructing the family structure.

Fourth, the trustful relationship between a pastor and the parishioners enables the latter to open their minds to receive pastoral counseling. But sometimes, such an ongoing relationship between them may hinder the parishioners from

^{ee} Ibid., 7.

^{ee} Ibid., 8.

discussing shameful issues with the pastoral counselor. Then, the counselor's image plays an important role in this situation. In other words, a counselee's conviction that a counselor will keep a confidentiality and that discussing problems with a counselor will not affect their ongoing relationship, will remove such a hinderance.

Fifth, the pastoral crisis counselor will focus on the meaning of spirituality, unlike secular crisis intervention.

All crises are religious at their core; they involve ultimate issues with which one must come to terms if one's life is to be fulfilled. The minister's counseling is in its final and basic concern spiritual.²⁴

Finally, pastoral crisis counseling will be effective to Korean-Americans with the addition of educative counseling described above.

Practical Applications

I have selected two typical cases from my pastoral counseling experiences which can often be observed in the Korean-American community.

Case 1: A middle-aged couple emigrated to the United States about ten years ago. They own two liquor stores in town. Each of them manages one store. The wife is an active church member but her husband is not. She called me to drop by her store. I met her in her store the next day. She complained of her life. Their stores are open all the

²⁴ Ibid., 8.

year round, and she is tired of her life. Economically they must be above middle-class, but the wife is still forced to carry out a traditional wife's responsibility at home even though both work in the stores. She told me that she does not find happiness or joyfulness in her marriage, and her husband is interested only in making money. So she became more devotional in the church to seek spiritual happiness. During the first part of our talk, I was confused about what she really wanted from me, because she was not insisting on equality or a role change in the marriage. Rather she still thinks of herself as a typical Korean wife.

Case 2: A middle-aged couple emigrated to the United States about ten years ago. The wife is a nurse and her husband runs a small business. She speaks English better than her husband does, and in every respect, she could be considered better than her husband. For instance, her job conditions and social relations are better. It seems to me that she has become more Americanized than her husband. She called me one day and started to complain about her husband. I visited her home a few days later when both were at home. Her complaints were as follows: her husband pushes her to follow his way of life regarding sex role, money spending, child rearing, etc. Both were angry about the other's life style. She seemed to be excessively attached to a sense of superiority as compared with her husband, whereas he denied

her idea. He is an active church member while she is not.

At first, I made attempts to set up a formal counseling session for the first couple in my church, but the husband did not respond to my request at all. Thus, I went to visit his store and met him. Since the first meeting, I have made several contacts with him and spent a good deal of time sharing common concerns. When first dealing with him, I focused on increasing a trusting relationship. In doing so, I tried to understand his position and to respect who he was. However, both the wife and the husband resisted a formal counseling setting. The husband especially revealed hatred toward the idea of having treatment as a patient. I had to watch my approach so that he would not feel that way. After having several individual meetings, he began to disclose what he had in mind. He said that he was really concerned about his family and so he worked hard.

By and large, I exercised a supportive counseling skill on the one hand and provided him with some information about the marriage life of other Korean-Americans on the other. At that time, my impression of him was that if I pushed him to change his life-style, my relationship with him would soon stop. One particular piece of advice I gave him was to "have a trip with his wife." They did and later he began to attend the worship service. Since then, I have observed that they have tried to understand each other. However,

their relationship still does not deviate far from a traditional Korean couple's interaction.

I had several informal counseling sessions with the second couple at their home. During the sessions, I found a vicious circle which was hardly broken. They continued to blame each other. The wife's capability must be better than her husband's in terms of social adaptability. However, my notion of that adaptability was that it could not be an important factor or dominate their marriage. I tended to be on the husband's side unconsciously and, therefore, I tried to be cautious and control my attitude. In fact, she does not want a divorce. Instead, she is much too proud of herself and seems to identify her marriage with the white middle-class marriages which she experienced in her office. The couple and I shared ideas in regard to the ideal marriage which Korean-Americans desire and the couples' hopes for their marriage. As an educational counselor, I gave them information regarding those issues. Gradually, the couple began to make concessions to their previous positions. However, taking my efforts into consideration, they are really slow to change. The reason may be that the Korean wife is trying to exercise more power in her marriage than the husband expects. In addition, for the most part, I had used a supportive and educative counseling approach in counseling with them.

In relation to the three types of acculturations described before (pages 47-9), the husband of the first couple is especially closer to the type I, who tends to maintain his/her own cultural heritage. The husband understands his responsibility in marriage as a breadwinner only. A cultural counselor must treat him with great respect in regard to his understanding of roles, even though it is inadequate from the white, middle-class point of view.

However, if a counselor builds a good, trustful relationship with that type of person, my experience is that such a person tends to rely on a counselor totally. If not, the client would terminate counseling soon. The husband, rather than the wife, in this case holds the key for the solution of the problem, because she is still dependent on her husband in many respects.

The second couple's type of marriage is also often observed in the Korean-American community. The wife is closer to the type II, who tends to identify him/herself with the white middle-class group. Educational counseling is primarily suggested to deal with her problems, because it is assumed that she is oriented by wrong information about cultural assimilation. To the husband, there needs to be comfort to heal his fallen dignity in his relationship with his wife. In addition, a counselor must help him find his new role in marriage. If he can keep the authority of a

husband in terms of the positive Korean merit, without losing equality, he will be satisfied with his new role.

In order to achieve effective pastoral counseling, a pastoral counselor needs to recognize the stage of adaptation the parishioners are in when they bring their problems to him/her. Regarding the "A-B-C method,"²⁵ if boiling down the problem (stage B) is not done adequately, the next stages, C and D, will fail.

²⁵ Howard Clinebell has adapted this method from psychiatrist Warren Jones. It includes: achieve a relationship; boil down the problem; challenge constructive action; and develop a growth-action plan. Clinebell, Basic Types of Pastoral Care, 205-8.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

Generally speaking, the first generation Korean-Americans seem to fail in adopting American lifestyles. When most of them emigrated to the United States, they brought a naive expectation of a paradise in America or of economic richness, without having a full preliminary knowledge about American life. As a result, in many respects they still remain Korean in America.

The other reason for their failure may stem from the fact that the model of the successful Asian-American group is hardly found in terms of cultural assimilation. For instance, Chinese immigrants are often identified with a Chinatown. Japanese immigrants show a high rate of interracial marriage since World War II.¹ Both of these examples bring negative connotations to Korean-Americans.

In addition, "After the fall of Saigon in April 1975, over 650,000 persons from Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea

¹ Kurt Anderson, "The New Ellis Island," Time Magazine, 13 June 1983: 21.

resettled in the U.S."² Such an influx has brought about unexpected problems, especially to California's dominant society, and negatively affected the normal cultural adaptation process of other Asian groups there. In other words, the new Indochinese immigrants seem to share a strong feeling of solidarity within their communities, whereas they are indifferent to get along with the dominant society.³ Most of them seem to be satisfied with the fact that they can make a better living in the U.S. without difficulties, even though they do not speak English or know American society. However, interestingly enough, they seem to invest in an increase of political power because they believe that it is absolutely necessary to protect their rights (as an ethnic minority) as well as to push the U.S. government to maintain a good relationship with their Asian homeland governments.⁴ Such a tendency--the increase of political power but resistance to adaptation--is prevailing in the Korean community, too. Nevertheless, "the Yellow Power Movement"⁵ is desirable but must not become a segregationist

² Jacqueline Desbarats and Linda Holland, "Indochinese Settlement Patterns in Orange County," Amerasia 10, no. 1 (1983): 23.

³ Ibid., 25.

⁴ Don T. Nakanishi, "Asian American Politics: An Agenda for Research," Amerasia 12, no. 2 (1985-1986): 3-5.

⁵ Derald Sue, Counseling the Culturally Different, 123.

movement.

Finally, there has been a theoretical development concerning the ethnic minority's role in the pluralistic society since the 1960s. For instance, "the salad bowl theory"⁴ encourages ethnic minority groups to keep their own cultures. Such a theory affects Asian communities both positively and negatively. The negative aspect is that some ethnic minorities can justify their segregationist attitudes in the name of the salad bowl theory.

As a result, these external factors mentioned above drive Korean-Americans to the wall. In doing so, there are some plausible questions which the Koreans can raise: "Where can an ideal model be found in the U.S.?" "How do we successfully go through the adaptation process?" "Is the cultural assimilation a developmental life stage or a backward one for us?" In fact, these questions are not easily answered.

Under this situation, in a similar vein, Korean-American couples are still hoping for marital happiness as they did in Korea. Such a hope is natural and there is nothing wrong with it. However, the questions are: "What kind of marital happiness do they really hope for?" "How do they define it?" "Does it mean the traditional Korean

⁴ Anderson, 20. (The salad bowl theory indicates that different cultures can be contained in a bowl without losing their uniqueness.)

concept of marital happiness or the white middle-class concept?" Taking into consideration that every Korean-American is undergoing the adaptive process to some extent, they can no longer be traditional Koreans. Therefore, their definition of marital happiness is often unclear even to themselves. Some Korean-American couples may be more happy with their advanced economic situation. However, it is noteworthy that such an economic improvement is only one of many elements which constitute happiness in marriage.

In the last two decades, the Koreans, for the most part, have invested themselves in making money for the purpose of survival. Now they, who have gained a certain degree of wealth, are beginning to be aware of the simple truth that money does not guarantee happiness. Further, they know neither any successful Asian-American group, nor an ideal marriage type which can be followed by Korean-American couples. Thus, they are experiencing severe conflicts in marriage as well as in social life.

The pastoral counselor needs to help them find their identity first and then create their own ideal marriage in terms of role and power distribution, etc. To the Koreans, such a structural condition is not an easy thing to overcome, but they must not attribute an unhappy life to the environment anymore. "The two decades," in some sense, was enough time for the Korean communities to carry out self-

3examination and fortunately the American society has well endured the Korean communities' lack of participation in this society. Eui Young Yu writes,

The success of the community in the future will depend upon how well it can mobilize resources, coordinate programs, and offer services to its widely scattered members.⁷

Now it is observed that many more Korean scholars are dealing with these issues as are many kinds of organizations.

Finally, Augsburg's work suggests for this project how the Korean community can become the "healing community" in order to carry out these tasks. He says that

the healing community is both metaphor and reality. As metaphor, it is a phrase used to describe those family systems, neighborhood groups, health care systems, committed support groups, and creative churches that surround persons with care. As a reality, healing community is any positive network of persons that enables health, growth, or human transformation.⁸

If the Korean community functions as a healing community, it will be able to produce such successful models described above. Then their marital conflicts, which mainly derive from structural tension, will be dissolved.

⁷ Eui-Young Yu, "Korean Communities in America: Past, Present, and Future," Amerasia 10, no. 2 (1982): 44.

⁸ Augsburg, 365.

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